Southern Utah Wilderness and the Meaning of the West

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Abstract: The debate over Southern Utah wilderness and the more recent Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument designation transcends issues of environmental protection to include a host of regional-specific themes and concerns. Cultural contours and cleavages such as a rural Western economy and federal versus de jure wilderness, have framed the Utah wilderness debate. These cultural contours and their significance are discussed in the larger context of a western political culture and stem from a series of in-depth qualitative interviews. It is only once the full range of cultural issues are considered that conflict can be minimized and the true meaning of the West better understood.

Key words: policy, Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, economics

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In September 1996, using the 1906 Antiquities Act, President Bill Clinton proclaimed 1.7 million acres of Southern Utah as the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. Even today, said the president, "This unspoiled natural area remains a frontier ... it is a place where one can see how nature shapes human endeavors in the American West" (USDI 1997). Presidential proclamation 6920 is but one part of a long contemptuous battle over public lands in Utah. The Utah wilderness debate provides an excellent case in which to understand how political culture may affect environmental politics in the American West. This case study is chosen because of its timeliness, relevancy, the cultural and sometimes contrasting values it involves, its environmental impact, and the number and diversity of political players involved. Within the battle for additional Utah wilderness, cultural values are at play, and divergent ones are often pitted against one another for the meaning of the West.

The debate in southern Utah involves more than just wilderness or monument designation. The contours of the debate, real or imaginary,

are central in many respects and invariably frame its discourse. There are five such contours discussed herein: (1) the Utah economy; (2) federal versus local control of public lands; (3) the lack of incorporating local knowledge and gathering community input into environmental decision making; (4) the perceived influence of non-Western and urban interests; and, (5) the differences between de facto and de jure wilderness. At times, in fact, the question of wilderness seems a peripheral issue. But whatever the importance of Utah wilderness may be, it has proven to be an excellent means to further understand some of this study's earlier findings. An in-depth examination of this particular case, using personal narratives to help illustrate, shows just how unmistakable a Western political culture can be, and the environmental ramifications it inevitably presents.

BACKGROUND

Henry David Thoreau once mused that "in wilderness is the preservation of the world," thus staking an importance on wilderness that would reverberate in the years to come. It is not surprising, therefore, that the designation of wilderness often elicits the most passion and controversy among those concerned with public land issues. Much of this is due to the language of the 1964 Wilderness Act that defines wilderness as an area "...where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain." An area may be determined suitable for wilderness designation if it has the following characteristics:

> [It is] an area of undeveloped land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the impact of man's works substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least 5, 000 acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation in use and in an unimpaired condition; and, (4) may also contain ecological, or other features of scientific, educational , scenic, or historic value (Public Law 88-571 1964).

Congress has the authority to designate areas as wilderness and uses its power to do so under the act. The intent is to make designations permanent and to add new lands as Congress sees fit.

The 1964 act established the National Wilderness Preservation System and set aside 9.14 million acres of wilderness in 54 areas, all on national forests. The system now protects more than 99 million acres of wilderness in national forests, wildlife refuges, parks, and BLM lands, and is managed by a host of agencies including the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, and the Fish and Wildlife Service. As the Table below shows, more than 95% of designated wilderness is located in these 12 western states.

Although protected to preserve its natural conditions, a number of non-motorized activities such as horseback riding, hiking, camping, fishing, and hunting are allowed in wilderness areas. Preexisting and valid extractive uses are also allowed to continue until permits granted for such activities expire, are abandoned, or are purchased by the government. Preexisting grazing is also allowed to continue as long as it is found consistent with sound resource management practices. Activities that are not allowed in wilderness areas include mining (new claims),

Table. Western state wilderness areas, 1995.

State	Acreage
Alaska	57,408,589
Arizona	4,537,864
California	13,851,936
Colorado	3,257,398
Idaho	4,005,545
Montana	3,442,305
Nevada	792,525
New Mexico	1,613,263
Oregon	2,087,072
Utah	800,958
Washington	4,320,308
Wyoming	3,080,358
Western Total	99,198,121
National Total	103,596,244

Source: Bureau of Land Management, Washington, D.C., 1995.
Note: This is federal wilderness acreage in the states, managed by the Bureau of Land Management, the US Forest Service, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Park Service.

timber harvesting, chaining, water development, mountain biking, and use of any motorized equipment such as snowmobiles. These allowances in the 1964 wilderness bill can be seen as a compromise between preservationists and those resource interests concerned with grazing, mining, timber harvesting, water development, and motorized recreation.

In 1976, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) required the BLM to inventory all roadless areas suitable for wilderness classification. Completed on a state by state basis, Utah's wilderness inventory was completed in 1980. Although a highly controversial and contested issue, the BLM ended up recommending 1.8 million acres as possible wilderness in the state.

The debate over wilderness designation has a long and notable ancestry, and has been ongoing since preservation calls were made by John Muir and foresters such as Aldo Leopold, Arthur Carhart, and Bob Marshall during the 1920s (Hendee et al. 1990, Zaslowsky and Watkins 1994). The dialogue between what political scientist Christopher McGrory Klyza calls 'preservationists" and "technocratic utilitarians" has a rich historical context showing just how little the debate over wilderness has changed since its institutional inception (Klyza 1996).

Environmental historian Roderick Nash believes the historic conception of wilderness, especially the frontier movement from east to west, provides a glimpse into the American mind (Nash 1967). Those such as Leopold also recognized the importance of the frontier in how the concept of wilderness was first constructed: "To the laborer in the sweat of his labor, the raw stuff on his anvil is an adversary to be conquered. So was wilderness an adversary to the pioneer" (Leopold 1966). Yet, Leopold also contends that it is the philosophical "laborer in repose" that sees "...that same raw stuff is something to be loved and cherished, because it gives definition and meaning to his life" (Leopold 1966).

The Debate: The Birdwatchers and Roughriders

The battle over the federal designation of additional wilderness areas in southern Utah involves up to 5.7 million acres of Utah's 22 million acres of public land. The contested area abuts six national parks and recreation areas—Zion, Capitol Reef, Arches, Canyonlands, Bryce Canyon, and Glen Canyon, and includes several geological systems including the Upper Paria Canyon, the White and Vermillion Cliffs, and the Kaiparowits Plateau. The area also includes coveted archeological sites and findings from native peoples such as the early Anasazi, Fremont,

Southern Paiute, and Navajo cultures. Given the varied terrain, the region is also home to a multitude of various flora and fauna.

For these reasons, wilderness advocates such as the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance, the Grand Canyon Trust, the Utah Wilderness Coalition, and thousands of Utah and non-Utah residents believe the area should be forever preserved in its most natural and primitive state. The region, the last to be mapped in the continental U.S., remains the most primitive and wild place in the lower forty-eight states. Its proximity to national parks, amount of surrounding public lands, and distance from any major urban areas, some observers say, makes southern Utah the prime candidate for future American wilderness designation.

There are a number of recommendations made by organizations concerning the amount of land that should be set aside as wilderness in the state (as of 1997). One million acres or less has been recommended by Utah's county governments, 1.2 million acres by Utah representatives Bill Orton and Jim Hansen, 1.9 million acres by the BLM, 2.8 million acres by the Utah Wilderness Association, and 5.7 million acres by the Utah Wilderness Coalition. Despite these acreage variations, predictably, the debate has focused on the two extreme proposals pitting the county position, interpreted as the local or rural response, against the 5.7 million acre plan championed by groups such as the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance.

The Utah Wilderness Coalition represents 115 citizen groups that support the designation of 5.7 million acres of Utah BLM land as wilderness—approximately 15 percent of all land in the state. The group formed in 1985 as a response to the perceived failure of the BLM Utah lands inventory—not enough wilderness. The "Citizen's Wilderness Proposal" was first introduced by then Utah Congressmember Wayne Owens as H.R. 1500, and then reintroduced as "America's Redrock Wilderness Protection Act" by Maurice Hinchey of New York. It is the largest acreage proposal and adopts the strictest interpretation of the 1964 Act.

Similar to earlier wilderness disputes, the Coalition and its former spokesperson Wallace Stegner see the conflict on the Colorado Plateau as not only one between the material and the spiritual, but also one of disparate cultures.

According to Stegner:

> Utahns were, and some still are, frontiersmen. They share states' rights assumptions and biases. Away from Wasatch Front, the population is so thin and the wild land so extensive that they cannot conceive of its being damaged.... No more than other Westerners do they like dictation or interference from outsiders,

> and they are as susceptible as other frontier Westerners to the temptation of violence. Many consider the wilderness inventory, and indeed all federal regulation, an unwarranted intrusion into land use decisions that should properly be made by the people who live there (Stegner 1989).

Stegner saw the conflicting parties as consisting of the "...Birdwatchers and the Roughriders, the responsible stewards of the earth and those galvanized by the spirit that 'won the West'" (Stegner 1989). Although Stegner, a Utah native, remained sympathetic to many rural Utah concerns and understood the roots of their intransigence, many of which stem from historic religious persecution, he believed they have failed to read their own history. Southern Utahns, said Stegner, are willing to sacrifice what makes their place so special in return for marginal economic and material rewards.

Many wilderness advocates appeal to the emotional and soulful importance of this redrock environment. T. H. Watkins, editor of Wilderness, the magazine of the Wilderness Society, points to the "...usual suspects [that] include mining, grazing, timber extraction, oil and gas development, industrial-strength tourism, and unfettered urban growth and the water projects that will be necessary to sustain it" as the primary threats to the southern Utah environment (Watkins 1996).

Those who live in wilderness areas, on the other hand, often feel under siege by those who live outside, but nevertheless want to "lock up" the area's natural resources. It is southern Utah counties, says the Utah Wilderness Education Project, an advocate for the county position, that together have the most collective expertise about the area's wilderness, e.g., proper boundaries, micro-economic impacts, travel corridors. Therefore, it is largely believed that the people closest to the land should have more decision-making power over how that land is managed.

Southern Utahns are often portrayed as being against additional wilderness or monument designation—sometimes out of principle and sometimes for economic factors (Kluger 1997). While those like Stegner and Watkins direct criticism at the "usual suspects," many southern Utahns see extractive industries, on a limited scale, as being the only means of recovering a lost rural economy, keeping a distinct culture intact, and providing the incentives to keep young adults in the area.

An important component in the wilderness debate has been the use and contesting nature of public opinion polling. As a whole, Utah residents are in favor of additional wilderness area designations in the southern part of their state. Studies show there are pockets of "anti-environmentalism" in the West and southern Utah is used as one such example. The Utah wilderness surveys cited, however, were taken before the acrimony became more pronounced and the sides more clearly visible (1986 and 1990). Since these surveys, there have been a number of competing polls and other information used by various parties in the debate to strengthen their positions. Surveys and other information that confirms support are embraced while those that question are eschewed.

Other measures of public opinion show state residents to be supportive of the 5.7 million acre plan. Utah governor Mike Leavitt, asking for public comment on the contesting bills, received 22,000 letters and petitions, 65 % of which supported the largest acreage set aside (Kriz 1996). County hearings were also scheduled by the state to elicit additional input, and while many of these hearings were held in the most rural parts of the state, hundreds of miles away from the central Utah population—an intentional strategy according to wilderness advocates—citizens in favor of H. R. 1500 outnumbered opponents by a reported ratio of six, seven, and nine to one. According to wilderness advocate Dave Foreman, the Utah Sierra Club and SUWA effectively mobilized wilderness sentiment and "...took that lie away from the Utah congressional delegation that the people of Utah are against wilderness" (Kriz 1996).

Despite this apparent success, however, those who support additional wilderness designation report the public hearing process to be anything but the hearing of the public. Despite wilderness proponents outnumbering their opposition, former Utah congressmember Karen Shepherd reports that "never in my memory have so many had so little influence on their own elected representatives" (Glick 1995).

A more representative way to measure Utah wilderness opinion, state public opinion polls show state residents to be in favor of additional wilderness, with how much wilderness to designate still in question. A Desert News poll finds only 4% of the state wanting no more additional land set aside as wilderness, while 26 % support the 1.8 million acre proposal, and 36 % supporting the 5.7 million acre plan (Satchell 1995). There is no consensus on how much wilderness Utahns favor. Surveys done by Utah State University, Desert News, Salt Lake Tribune, and other interested parties, uncovers no consistent majority favoring a certain proposal.

THE GRAND STAIRCASE-ESCALANTE NATIONAL MONUMENT

Encompassed within the debate over southern Utah wilderness designation is President Clinton's executive order creating the Grand Stair-

case-Escalante National Monument. Although monument status is not as restrictive as is wilderness designation, lands within the Monument are withdrawn from entry, location, selection, sale, leasing, or other disposition under public land laws (USDI 1997). Thus, no new mineral leases can be issued within monument boundaries. Despite these restrictions, several valid existing rights in the monument are recognized, meaning that such preexisting activities as grazing can continue.

Since the Antiquities Act of 1906, more than 100 national monuments have been established by presidential proclamation, including those in the southwest such as Grand and Bryce Canyons and Zion. Although there are differences between wilderness and monument status, Congress does have the ability to create wilderness areas within a monument's boundaries, and the Grand Staircase-Escalante contains approximately 900,000 acres of existing BLM wilderness study areas (WSAs).

Many people in Utah believe that the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument's designation was politically motivated. Made during the 1996 presidential campaign, with Ralph Nader's Green Party threatening to take environmental votes away from the Democrats, Clinton was ensured positive environmental coverage while knowing that winning Utah was already improbable. Clinton's strategy appears to have gone as planned. For example, whereas Utah Senator Bob Bennett said Clinton's pronouncement "...shows blatant disregard for existing process in exchange for a campaign photo-op at the Grand Canyon," executive director of the National Resources Defense Council, John Adams, said the president "...deserves tremendous credit for his leadership and vision in preserving this portion of Utah's magnificent and unique red rock wilderness" (Siegel 1996).

Western Cultural Contours

Within the debate over wilderness and monument designation in southern Utah are a number of important and repeating themes that have set the terms of its discussion. Taken together, these cultural contours and cleavages show how Western political culture can shape and inform its environmental politics.

Economics: Southern Utah as Playground or Paycheck

The Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument and other southern Utah wilderness proposals include areas that have the potential for increased economic development. The Kaiparowits Plateau includes 650,000 acres of coal-rich lands that the Dutch-owned Andalex company wants to extract. Coal-mining the Kaiparowits has drawn interest since 1965 from such companies as Southern California Edison, San Diego Gas and Electric, and Arizona Public Services of Phoenix (the Kaiparowits energy consortium) (Bishop 1996). The proposed production of 2.5 million tons of coal, and its accompanying sales taxes, property taxes, royalty payments, and potential source of employment, is seen by several government and business leaders in the state as a way to resuscitate a fragile southern Utah economy (Utah Energy Office 1989).

Andalex's proposed Smokey Hollow coal mine has been challenged on economic grounds by those wishing to preserve the area. The Flagstaff-based Grand Canyon Trust argues that the mine is comparatively uneconomical due to higher transportation costs and lower coal quality than central Utah mining operations (Duffield 1995). Expecting to sell its coal to the California industrial and Pacific Rim steam coal markets, Andalex has asked the state to commit resources to build and maintain new roads along the coal haul route. The Trust sees the mine as not only environmentally deleterious, but also views these government subsidies as being economically unsound.

The economic value and opportunity costs associated with wilderness and monument designation is a central theme in the public lands controversy. Larger wilderness designation bills are opposed by most rural county officials because they are seen as a loss of revenue either from lost payments-in-lieu of taxes or mineral leases. Although some cite this as a red herring, the loss of possible revenue produced by school and institutional trust lands—acreage owned by Utah for the purpose of generating revenue for education—is another reason put forth by Utah counties not to support a larger wilderness bill.

Some southern Utah counties believe wilderness will jeopardize the economic and social stability of the region, while preservationists believe it will spur economic growth in wilderness related service sectors while also protecting the environment. County representatives point to the small percent of privately owned land in Utah and the economic ramifications of this federal presence. It is private property, not federal land, they say, that generates revenue to pay for such services as education, infrastructure, law enforcement, emergency services, fire protection, and ironically, a host of tourist needs and services.

The assumption that the wilderness-related service sector provides an economically and environmentally sound alternative is also suspect by many in the region. For example, one comprehensive study done by

Utah State University in 1995 finds that the economic benefits from added wilderness recreation appear to be inconsequential (Snyder et al. 1995).

The economic arguments made by the countries and others who favor less wilderness are doubted by such organizations as the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance. The supposed economic opportunity costs associated with increased wilderness is fallacious according to the Alliance. Executive director Mike Matz contends that wilderness opponents are "...clinging to this historic notion that they have to exploit the land in order to make a living" (Glick 1995 *in litt.*). Not only are several existing uses respected by the Wilderness Act, but the Alliance contends that global economic trends, changing energy markets, increased automation, and the increasing importance of the service sector, among other factors, are changing national as well as rural Utah employment patterns. Wilderness, contends the Alliance using logic supported by Thomas Michael Power and other economists, provides the possibility of abandoning the boom and bust economy symbolic of the West in favor of a more sustainable and ecologically sensitive economy.

These differences of interpretation regarding the southern Utah economy are ubiquitous across the West and are perhaps best illustrated by a bumper sticker asking, "Are you an environmentalist or do you work for a living?" In other words, environmentalists, including those in Utah, are being perceived as condemning all work in nature, or sentimentalizing certain archaic forms of work. The environmentalists are viewed as being unaware of the nature that supports them, whether it be the wood that heats their homes, the dammed water they drink, or the electricity that runs their computers. As environmental historian Richard White notes, environmentalists are seen as being part of a privileged leisure class that identifies nature as a place to play and visit, and not a place to work, stay, or live (White 1996).

Federal Versus Local Control

A predominant theme in this debate is the amount of land in the area that is already owned and operated by the federal government. Simply put, preservationists believe that this federal presence is necessary to ensure that these public lands can be enjoyed by a public that goes beyond southern Utah. The canyons of Utah, says writer and wilderness supporter Stephen Trimble, belong not to an elite cadre of backpackers, not to the cattle-raising families of Escalante and Kanab, not to the Utah state legislature, not to the Bureau of Land Management, but belong to all citizens of the United States. In truth, they belong to no one (Trimble 1996 *in litt.*).

According to SUMA's Mike Matz, public ownership is necessary to ensure that non-Westerners – those who have long subsidized Western growth and development – are taken into account when land use decisions are being made. Underlying this support of federal control is a distrust among preservationists of what southern Utah communities would do to the land if given the opportunity. Matz maintains that "this land is owned by you and me. But if special interests and local politicians have their way, it is a land that could be lost to us forever" (Matz 1997 pers. com.).

The local response to this extensive federal presence is an angry and culturally-based one. According to Garfield county commissioner, Louise Liston, whose county is comprised of less than 2 percent of private land:

> The truth is, massive federal ownership of lands in Utah and the West with its accompanying laws, regulations, and policies, is destroying the custom, culture and economic stability of rural America [and] wilderness is perceived as yet one more nail in the coffin (Liston 1995 pers. com.).

The ubiquitous federal presence is cause for concern for many in southern Utah. Clinton's use of the Antiquities Act, without meaningful state consultation, and proclaiming the south rim of the Grand Canyon in Arizona but not Utah, angered Utah political representatives and provides an example for some of just how out of touch the federal government has become with some Western communities. According to Utah Senator Orrin Hatch, this "mother of all land grabs" is a clear example of "the arrogance of federal power" (Siegel 1996).

This antipathy towards the federal government may stem from the belief that those closest to the area's natural resources know best how to manage those resources. For example, in one survey of 602 respondents in southwestern Utah, a largely rural area including the cities of St. George, Hurricane, La Verkin, Toquerville, and Virgin, residents express the most satisfaction with the job state (65%) and local (66%) governments are doing to manage the area's natural resources, while they express the lowest satisfaction for federal government management (48%) (pers. obs.).

Ken Sizemore, a community and economic development director for the Utah Association of Governments and a member of the Grand Staircase-Escalante Monument planning team, believes that Mormon history provides a partial but important explanation for hostility towards the federal government (Sizemore 1997 pers. com.). Historically persecuted and driven out of such states as Illinois and Missouri, the federal government refused to defend Mormon religious rights, as well as the

legitimacy of the Desert state. The federal government, according to Sizemore, is perceived by Mormon culture as being historically hostile, or at least unsympathetic, to Mormonism, and this history's legacy still endures.

It is also worthwhile to note that while southern Utahns remain disdainful of a far-away and overbearing government, they do not seem to show the same degree of enmity towards out-of-region corporations such as the Dutch-owned Andalex company.

Local Knowledge and Community Input

Closely related to this federal antagonism is the feeling among many in the region that they are continually slighted by an overcentralized, technocratic, and out-of-touch federal government. The President's proclamation, made without meaningful Utah consultation, angered those who believe they have the most at stake in protecting the area's natural resources and amenities. These sorts of feelings are pervasive in southern Utah, and while most are comfortable with the status quo of BLM multiple use management, most express a desire for greater consultation and community collaboration.

Jim Matson, a one-time Kaibab Industries employee (one of the last regional timber companies to close), and now a "biopolitics" consultant in southern Utah, believes that federal administrative agencies "...cannot hide behind palace walls," but must become more entrenched and integrated into local communities (Matson 1997 pers. com.). Matson cites the Soil Conservation Service and BLM as examples of successful integrating efforts (Foss 1960, Culhane 1981).

Scott Truman, executive director of the Utah Rural Development Council, and vice chair of the Southwestern Utah Planning Authorities Council, concurs with Matson and believes the outside expert is bound to be more successful as a "local." Accordingly, says Truman, "The BLM Resource Manager, the area Forester, the District Ranger, the FWS, and the environmentalists need to be a part of the community. They need to coach Little League, be on community committees, be involved with the PTA, rope with ropers, drink coffee at the local café, etc. ...As 'locals' we can better resolve our differences amongst ourselves" (Truman 1997 pers. com.). Truman also contends that as a local, one gets better feel for the area's land, politics, and attached values. Truman, however, is adamant about expanding the traditional definition of "local" to encompass a variety of stakeholders, including preservationists (Truman 1997 pers. com.).

Although many in southern Utah are disappointed by being left out of such important federal decision making as the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument designation, they now do not want to be left out of its operations. Gerry Rankin, mayor of Big Water, Utah, the likely southern gateway community to the newly established monument, believes a hearing of community concerns is absolutely essential if local support is to be galvanized (Rankin 1997 pers. com.). Although Rankin is disappointed at being left out of the initial monument planning process, she hopes her town can heretofore play a role in its management, such as having a BLM Monument substation in Big Water.

Many in the region believe they are vilified by those outside southern Utah and receive no credit for keeping the beauty of the area intact. Karla Johnson, a rancher in Kanab, Utah, likens the situation to a neighbor who after admiring another neighbor's home and upkeep, demands to take over its management, while they have never put any work of effort into its maintenance (Johnson 1997 pers. com.). Thus, there is a feeling among many of those in the region, many of whose families have lived in the area for generations, that local knowledges are not appreciated nor taken into account by environmental decision makers.

Urban and Non-Western Influence

Several in southern Utah believe that increased wilderness designation and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument support comes from those outside the area who are either completely unfamiliar with the region, or use it solely on a playground basis. Much of this criticism is directed towards Eastern and California political representatives who want to dictate how land, that they are not responsible or accountable for, is managed.

Those outside the region, on the other hand, due to such instances as the hanging of the Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt in effigy, and "Black Wednesday" in which some Utah residents wore black ribbons and released black balloons to commemorate Clinton's Monument Proclamation, are apt to see locals as being environmentally hostile and thus untrustworthy caretakers.

Non-Western support for H. R. 1500 is indeed strong. For example, there are 82 co-sponsors of the bill as of 30 March 1997, and excluding California, only five are from the West. This Eastern support, especially from those such as original sponsor Maurice Hinchey of New York and former Senator Bill Bradley of New Jersey, is resented by some Western congressional representatives. According to Utah Senator Orrin Hatch,

"They don't even know what wilderness is. We do [and] we've got plenty in Utah" (anonymous 1996a).

Another example of non-Western animosity is provided by Utah representative Jim Hansen, who steered his House Resources Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Land, to approve funding for protection of New Jersey's 17,500 acre Sterling Forest, but only if it was first declared as wilderness. Arguing that 5.7 million acres of wilderness does not fit southern Utah, just as 17,500 acres may not fit New Jersey, Hansen asserted that "roads in New York are the same as in Utah [and] power lines in Utah are the same as power lines in New York" (anonymous 1996b).

The debate over southern Utah wilderness has been framed in national terms, so a national strategy has been adopted. Because three-quarters of SUWA's members are from outside Utah, including 23 of the 36 members on its board of directors and advisory committee, and the acreage in question is federal and not state-owned land, the approach seems logical. Full-page ads in the New York Times and USA Today are meant to target a more sympathetic American audience.

Tom Robinson, director of conservation policy for the Grand Canyon Trust, notices a backlash in rural Utah because of this outsider strategy (Robinson 1997 pers. com.). Yet, Robinson, like other concerned preservationists, notes that these are national lands with certain national values attached to them; thus, the stakeholder community goes beyond southern Utah. But as Craig Sorenson, a BLM outdoor recreation planner in Escalante recognizes, "These are very fiercely independent people [and] they don't want to be told what to do. They perceive it as their land, yet it's public land. It belongs to all of us" (Ryckman 1996).

A rural-urban dichotomy is also evident in the debate, with those living in such cities as Salt Lake City perceived as being more pro-wilderness than those in rural Utah. Recognizing where pro-wilderness support is strongest, groups such as the SUWA are headquartered in Salt Lake City, and not in the more rural parts of the state.

Many in the area feel indignant about this vocal urban and non-Western wilderness support. The outside strategy has polarized much of the state, with preservationist concerns and beliefs being equated with non-rural beliefs and values. There is a sense that urbanites interpret southern Utah as a place where wilderness should be championed, while human occupation discouraged—even though it is the preserved records of early human occupation that makes the area such a valued anthropological and archeologic place of study.

Wilderness Versus wilderness

One of the most consistent themes in the southern Utah wilderness debate is the difference between de jure and de facto wilderness, that is, whether or not officially recognized wilderness will be beneficial or detrimental to the land. According to Sizemore, preservationists want officially recognized and managed wilderness (wilderness with a capital W), while locals believe that it is this official designation, or the newly established Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument designation, that will ruin and not preserve the area. According to Steve Crosby, commissioner of Kane County, "Environmentalists need to know that it does not have to have a wilderness stamp on it to be wilderness" (Crosby 1997 pers. com.). Hence, while one side emphasizes human restrictions, the other side focuses on human impact.

Some feel wilderness or monument status, as does national park status, poses a greater environmental threat than does the status quo. Boulder, Utah Mayor Julee Lyman sees the newly created monument as potentially harmful: "Now it's going to become more destroyed, because people destroy the land faster than animals do" (Ryckman 1996). The specter of another Moab, the epitome to many of a new recreation-based West that benefits those owning hotels, restaurants, and trinket shops, but not providing enough stability to keep young people from leaving the area, are feared by many in the region. Some also worry that wilderness or monument designation, as was the case with the former Capitol Reef National Monument, is a prelude to adding yet another national park in the region, and thus, more visitors and more impact.

Several residents of southern Utah also believe that wilderness in the area will *ipso facto* always remain wilderness, with or without official recognition. Crosby believes the land in question is self-preserving and will not be developed because of its rugged terrain and notorious lack of rainfall (Crosby 1997 pers. com.). Many believe that the fear among preservationists like SUWA's Matz (that if the area is not officially set aside, it will be developed) is unfounded given the area's past conservation record.

CONCLUSION

The debate over wilderness in southern Utah transcends questions of acreage and management. At its roots are different interpretations of culture and place. Although many of these differences go beyond a Western framework, and are more central to environmental values, some are particularity regional in orientation and are better understood using a

Western political cultural framework. Placing the debate in cultural terms also shows how the usual way of framing this debate—more or less wilderness—is overly simplistic. Arguing over 1.8 or 5.7 million acres misses the point. It is only once these dimensions of the debate are fully explored that the true meaning and importance of wilderness and the West can be better understood and conflict diminished.

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